

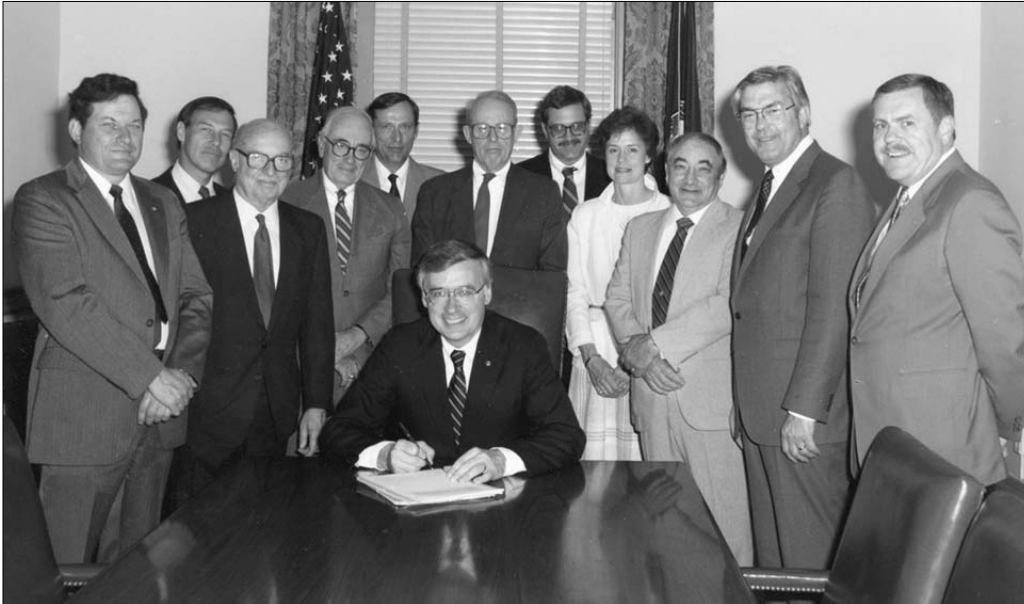


AMERICAN FRONTIER CULTURE FOUNDATION

Bringing the Past to Life

Volume 22, No. 1 Summer 2008

Frontier Culture Museum Celebrates 20th Anniversary



Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles (seated) signs the act creating the Frontier Culture Museum as a State agency in 1986.

Throughout this year the Frontier Culture Museum proudly celebrates the 20th anniversary of its public opening. As is common on such anniversaries we pause to take stock of the museum's rich history, its accomplishments, and its continued growth. In this issue of our newsletter we present the decisive events leading up to the opening of the Frontier Culture Museum in 1988. We will continue the timeline in the upcoming issues of our newsletter.

1975: Eric Montgomery, founder of the Ulster-American Folk Park in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, envisions a multi-nation, international undertaking, coordinated with the upcoming American Bicentennial celebration, to develop in America an outdoor museum dedicated to recreating the early lifestyles in the main countries from which American ancestors hailed. He advocates that such a museum could foster in America a deeper understanding of those older nations that now look to America for leadership, and help cement the bonds between those nations and America. Mr. Montgomery and others initiate the formation of a Joint International Council for a Museum of American Frontier Culture, with Lord John Donaldson of Kingsbridge, England, serving as President.

1976: Eric Montgomery, Dr. Alan Burgess (Vice Chancellor, New University of Ulster), and Prof. E.R.R. Green (Queen's University), travel to America to discuss the new museum concept with future U.S. Senator Mr. John Warner (Presidential appointee to coordinate the celebration of the U.S. Bicentennial), and Virginia Delegate Lewis A. McMurren, Jr. (head of the Bicentennial committee of the

Teachers Institute

On July 17-20 the Frontier Culture Museum hosted its 2008 Teachers Institute: *Africans, African-Americans & American Frontier Culture*, sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. The museum's Director of Education, Larry Sabourin, designed the 2008 Institute to coincide with the development of the museum's new West African exhibit.

Twenty teachers from Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee chose to participate in the Institute in order to more fully develop their understanding of the Africans who contributed to the development of the American frontier. Dr. Jack Njoku from the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology at Western Kentucky University offered the Institute's keynote address. In his address he used the material culture of African to show a trail of Igbo slave journeys from Virginia back to villages in the interior of Igboland (southeast portion of modern Nigeria). Dr. Njoku also participated in the remainder of the Institute, leading a discussion on Igbo aesthetics, community traditions, and values utilizing Igbo folksongs.

The Institute faculty also included Michael Twitty, Director of Interpretation for the Menare Foundation and an active researcher and author on the topic

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In Loving Memory

The Frontier Culture Museum and American Frontier Culture Foundation mourn the passing of Mr. Steve Dod, a long-time member of the Foundation's board of directors and trusted friend of the Museum. The 2008 Heritage Golf Classic, organized by the Foundation, has been dedicated in memory of Mr. Dod.

FCM 20th Anniversary continued from page 1



The Hon. Lewis A. McMurrin, Jr. was instrumental in the selection of Virginia as the location for the Frontier Culture Museum.

thirteen original states and Chairman of the Virginia Bicentennial Commission). John T. Schlebecker, eminent agricultural historian, hosts a meeting at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., to discuss Eric Montgomery's proposal. The attendees include scholars, museum professionals, government officials, and cultural representatives. All present at this meeting agree that the project is worthy and ask Dr. Henry Glassie, Chair of the Department of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania, to develop a project proposal.

1977: The Joint International Council visits potential sites for the proposed museum in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. A meeting of a new Scotch-Irish Society in the Shenandoah Valley coincides with the Council's trip to Virginia, during which time dignitaries from Northern Ireland, including Lord and Lady O'Neill, visit Staunton and meet Justice George M. Cochran and Gen. Arch

A. Sproul, both of whom will be instrumental in the American efforts to secure funding and State assistance in developing the proposed museum. Dr. Henry Glassie completes his full proposal in which he asserts that "the culture of the (American) frontier has been less adequately dealt with as compared to New England Puritan society, out of which grew American intellectual literary society, or the Virginia planters, out of which grew American economy. Yet in it (the frontier) the American character, ethnically synthetic, flexible yet wary, democratic yet individualistic, had its sources." He states that the museum should not be "a collection of interesting objects but a set of materials for an essay on the American identity to be written anew with each visitor." He also proposes that the museum consist of an American Appalachian farm as its center, surrounded by English, German, and Irish farms, plus a modern visitors center. The farms will form a natural stage for the demonstration of the arts that make a farm work—men, women, and children in costume displaying appropriate skills, not as actors living in the past but using props to teach. In his proposal, Dr. Glassie makes the case for selecting a site in Southwestern Pennsylvania or the Valley of Virginia because "it was not until the land rose and swelled that Westward moving people developed the distinct frontier culture. In this difficult environment people were forced out of accustomed habits into a willingness to engage in cultural trading." Eric Montgomery and Dr. Alan Burgess suggest to the Hon. Lewis McMurrin, Jr., recently appointed by newly-elected Governor John N. Dalton as his liaison representative to the Virginia legislature, that he take steps to secure the proposed museum for Virginia.

FCM 20th Anniversary continued on page 4

Museum on the Move: West African Exhibit

Under the guidance of museum staff and Umebe N. Onyejekwe, a Nigerian cultural official and consultant to the museum, the museum's new West African Exhibit begins to move from the drawing board to its permanent site in August. Ms. Onyejekwe arrived in Staunton in July and will remain until the museum completes construction of the exhibit in the fall. In addition, Professor David Aradeon, Chair of the Department of Archaeology and Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Studies at the University of Lagos (Nigeria), arrives later this summer to assist with the exhibit's construction. Professor Aradeon is a graduate of Columbia University. He is an advocate of traditional building methods and materials, co-founder and leader of the Nigerian Bamboo and Rattan Network and Build with Earth. He is an internationally-recognized expert on human settlements and the recipient of the 2006 Nigerian National Order of Merit.

The museum also anticipates a shipment from Nigeria, organized by Umebe Onyejekwe, of building materials and other objects for the exhibit. The

buildings materials include raphia palm mats for roofing the structures and other basic palm materials used in traditional building. The objects include wood carvings for ritual, decorative, and utilitarian purposes, pottery, basketry, and a range of common tools and implements found in traditional Nigerian family compounds. To the greatest extent possible the designs, shapes and patterns of these materials replicate those used in the 1700s.

When complete the exhibit will feature the daily life and culture of Igbo people in 18th-century Nigeria. During the height of the Atlantic slave trade the Igbo were the predominant African culture brought to Virginia. Research in recent years reveals that Africans represented as much as 20% of

the early American frontier population and, as a consequence, had an important influence on the development of the region. Therefore, an accurate exploration and understanding of the ethnic and cultural origins of the American frontier must include the homeland and culture of the Africans who were vital to its settlement.

The Frontier Culture Museum is proud to offer its patrons this unique opportunity. We encourage you to visit us often during the summer and fall months this year to see the museum staff and our friends from Nigeria construct this new exhibit. 🌿



Above: Umebe Onyejekwe selecting bamboo for the West African exhibit.



Left: Architectural rendering of the West African exhibit.

1979: The Joint International Council initiates the development of country-specific committees to research and secure historic structures, as well as funding, for the proposed museum. The United Kingdom Committee, chaired by Dr. Alan Burgess, holds its inaugural meeting. The Hon. Lewis A. McMurran, Jr. chairs the American Committee.



Justice George M. Cochran, Eric Montgomery, and Senator Frank Nolen.

1980: The German committee, chaired by Dr. Karl Klasen, former Ambassador to the United States, holds its inaugural meeting in March. The Virginia General Assembly, upon Governor Dalton's request, takes action to bring the museum to the Commonwealth by authorizing the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, in conjunction with the Joint International Council, to prepare preliminary plans for an outdoor museum. The General Assembly also identifies as a potential museum site a 78-acre tract of land adjacent to Staunton at the junction of interstates 64 and 81. Members of the Joint International Council, folklore experts, government officials, and academicians assemble in Staunton in October for a "Planning Conference for a Museum of American Frontier Culture," sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Governor John Dalton appoints the Hon. & Mrs. Lewis McMurran, Jr. and Justice & Mrs. George M. Cochran to represent Virginia on a visit to Northern Ireland and England later this year to attend the dedication of new buildings at the Ulster-American Folk Park, to confer with Eric Montgomery, Dr. Alan Burgess, and others to further plans for the proposed

museum in America, and to conduct other business on behalf of the Commonwealth.

1981: The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, with the support of Governor Dalton, commissions a feasibility study of the Staunton site. Prof. Carl J. Bellas and Prof. J. Thomas Regan of Virginia Polytechnic Institute will prepare the study.

1982: Professors Bellas and Regan complete their feasibility study, in which they note that the Staunton site, located near the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, is eminently suited for such a project and that such a museum would be a major boost to local tourism. Justice Cochran presents a copy of the feasibility study to newly-elected Governor Charles Robb at his gubernatorial inaugural luncheon. The U.K. Committee acquires the barns and cattle shed of an historic farm in Sussex, England, for the proposed museum's English exhibit. They initiate the process of documenting and dismantling the structures. English preservation laws prevent the removal of the accompanying historic home. Estimates to purchase, move, and rebuild actual historic farms from England, Northern Ireland, Germany, and America range in the millions of dollars. To obtain the necessary capital funds, and to satisfy the governor's request that the museum's organizers secure substantial private funds prior to receiving further state appropriations, the American Committee creates the American Frontier Culture Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, to accept all private donations for the museum. The first board of directors of the Foundation includes Senator Hunter B. Andrews, Justice George M. Cochran, the Hon. Lewis A. McMurran, Jr., John W. McPherson (Vice President), Eric Montgomery, Robert R. Oliver (Secretary & Assistant Treasurer), General Arch A. Sproul (President), Ross Weeks, Jr. (Treasurer & Assistant Secretary), and Klaus Wust. Ross Weeks, Executive Director of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, also serves as the new museum's temporary Director, traveling to Staunton one day each week. Governor Robb commits to reserving the former

Western State Hospital dairy farm property for the new museum as soon as the Foundation secures private funds to construct the museum and insure its financial self-sufficiency. Gen. & Mrs. Arch A. Sproul, the Hon. & Mrs. Lewis McMurran, Jr., and Robert Oliver travel to England for meetings with the U.K. Committee.

1983: The American Frontier Culture Foundation launches a \$3 million capital campaign under the leadership of Gen. Arch A. Sproul, Richard Robertson, Lee Cochran, Sam Graham, Gifford Mabie, Lisa Moore, Harry Nash, and McKeldon Smith. The City of Staunton, Augusta County, and City of Waynesboro commit their support. As a consequence, the Commonwealth of Virginia supports the campaign with an appropriation of \$100,000 for two years in Virginia's 1984-86 biennial budget.

1984: The staff of the Ulster-American Folk Park in Northern Ireland begin to document and dismantle three traditional stone structures in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. The Foundation hosts a celebratory dinner marking the occasion of raising its first \$1 million. Distinguished guests attending this dinner include U.S. Senator Paul Trible, Lord Donaldson, Lord O'Neill, and Eric Montgomery. The timbers of the barns and cattle shed from the historic farm in Sussex, England, arrive in Staunton.

1985: During an April reception in the British House of Lords, organized by Lord Donaldson and the Joint International Committee, Governor Robb announces his approval of the allocation of state funds to finance the necessary architects, engineers, and display designers to prepare the museum project for construction. The Virginia legislature officially transfers the former Western State Hospital property to the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation for the new Frontier Culture Museum on October 18 and appropriates \$1.7 million to build a modern visitors center and provide on-site utilities. Governor Charles Robb, Senator Hunter Andrews, and Justice George Cochran officiate

of African and African-American foodways, or the study of food as the product of culture and a part of identity. Mr. Twitty led a discussion on the impact of West African ethnic traditions on the diets of enslaved Africans in Virginia. Jason Gordon of the Duke Homestead in North Carolina led an interactive discussion and workshop centered on African wood carvings. Mr. Dylan Pritchett, President of the National Association of Black Storytellers, conducted a workshop on how to use storytelling in the classroom, as well as presenting stories of historical significance.

One of the Institute's primary objectives was to engage teachers in the design of enhanced lesson plans to be used in their classrooms and in the classrooms of their peers. Linda Olson and Jean Wimmer, teachers in the Newport News School District and members of the museum's Teacher Advisory Panel, led Institute participants through this process. They divided teachers in three teams and developed plans for use in elementary, middle, and high schools. These plans will also play a significant role in guiding the development of educational activities associated with the museum's upcoming West African exhibit.



Jason Gordon (right) discusses traditional African woodcarving with participants in the 2008 Teachers Institute

Planning is already underway for several next steps, including the reconvening of the Institute participants later this year to assess their individual experiences introducing the new curriculum to students and one or more weekend institutes for middle and high school students focusing on the

contributions of Africans to our American culture.

The Frontier Culture Museum is extremely grateful to the teachers who participated in the Institute, the faculty of the Institute, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities for their generous support of this endeavor. 🌐

Upcoming Activities

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| September 6: | Take your Partner, Barn dance at the 1850's American barn, 7-9pm, \$5/person |
| September 13: | Men at Work: Historic Trades Weekend, 9am-5pm daily, general admission |
| September 25: | 9 th annual Heritage Golf Classic , Staunton Country Club (contact Fran Carrington at 540-332-7850 for more information). The 2008 Heritage Golf Classic is dedicated to the memory of Mr. Steve Dod. |
| September 26-28: | Fortune-Williams Music Festival (visit www.fortunewilliamsmusicfestival.org for more information) |
| October 4: | Oktoberfest |
| October 19: | In Sweet Accord, Shape-note hymn signing in the Bowman House parlor, 2-4pm, general admission |
| September 23: | U.S. Naturalization Ceremony, 11am, Lee Cochran Pavilion |

SAVE THE DATE!

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| December 31: | New Year's Eve Gala sponsored by the American Frontier Culture Foundation, (location: Mary Baldwin College). |
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at a dedication ceremony in Staunton on October 22 for the site of the Frontier Culture Museum. The museum hires its first full-time employee, Walter Heyer, as its Director (formerly the Director of the Jamestown Festival Park). The stone structures from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, arrive in Staunton. Gen. Arch A. Sproul, Klaus Wust, Dr. Alan Burgess, and Walt Heyer travel to Germany in October to meet with Dr. Michael Rehs, the new Chair of the German Committee and Germany's General Secretary of the Institute for Foreign Relations, review two German farm houses, and meet with various German officials, including Chancellor Kessinger and representatives at Mercedes Benz.

1986: The Virginia legislature, upon the initiative of Senator Hunter Andrews, Senator Frank Nolen, and Delete Pete Giesen, creates the Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia as a state agency effective July 1, with a board of trustees appointed by the general assembly and the governor to oversee the museum. The board elects Justice George Cochran as its first chairman and Senator Frank Nolen as vice-chairman. This action results in a significant partnership between the private sector American Frontier Culture Foundation and the public agency Frontier Culture Museum through which the Commonwealth provides funds for the museum's infrastructure and the construction of its modern buildings and provides funds for routine operating expenses. The Foundation raises funds to acquire, move, and reassemble the historic buildings and to acquire the reproductions for furnishing and interpreting them. The Foundation also raises funds to support lectures, workshops, and special programs. The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation transfers the former Western State Hospital property to the Frontier Culture Museum. The American Frontier Culture Foundation acquires an historic Appalachian farm in Botetourt County, Virginia, and museum staff begin to document and dismantle the structures. This farm represents the synthesis of the English, Scotch-Irish, and

German cultures. Dr. Rehs, Chairman of the German Committee, organizes meetings in Germany for Justice & Mrs. Cochran, traveling on behalf of Governor Baliles, and Klaus Wust. During this trip they meet with business and community leaders in Stuttgart and receive their enthusiastic support of the museum. In addition, they receive from the Minister of Education a commitment of 75,000 Deutsche marks. (Sadly, Dr. Rehs dies suddenly in 1989 and the German efforts falter until several years later when Baron von Gayling appoints a German architect, Dr. Schärff, to succeed Dr. Rehs.)



Gov. Baliles receiving a memento from Justice Cochran upon laying the cornerstone for the Scotch-Irish farm.

1987: Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles lays the cornerstone for the Scotch-Irish farm at the Frontier Culture Museum in April. Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, Northern Ireland Office, participates in this ceremony. The German Committee begins to document and dismantle buildings for the museum.

1988: The Museum dedicates its historic American farm from Botetourt County, Virginia, in honor of Robert J. and Helen Campbell Kleberg. In addition, the Foundation acquires a 17th century yeoman's cottage from Hartlebury, Worcestershire, for the Museum's English exhibit. The Museum launches its educational outreach programs. The Frontier Culture Museum opens to the public on September 9 with a ceremony attended by the British ambassador, German ambassador, the Under-Secretary of State of Northern Ireland, Governor Baliles, and Senator John Warner among other

American and international dignitaries. On this occasion, Governor Baliles remarks that "History ought not be a dry recitation of facts and dates. Rather, history ought to be what it is—a living story of human experience, of dreams fulfilled and of tragedies endured, or discoveries made and empires lost." At this time the Frontier Culture Museum consists of a complete Scotch-Irish farm, American farm, and English cattle shed. By year's end the Museum completes its three modern structures, including an administrative building, museum store, and visitors center, under the careful guidance of Dick Robertson, President of the Foundation's Board of Directors. (The English house, German house and barn, and Ulster forge arrive in subsequent years.)

(The timeline will continue in the next newsletter. In the meantime, please visit our Visitors Center to explore the Museum's special 20th anniversary exhibit, "Frontier Culture: Creating the American Identity." The exhibit will open this fall.) 🍁



New Arrivals at the Museum

We welcome many new faces to the museum each year. Some visit us for the day with their family or as part of a school field trip. Others stay for...well, much longer and become part of the family. Here is a sample of the new, friendly faces that have greeted museum visitors this summer. 🐾



Colored Dorking chick.



Cotswold ewe & her lambs.

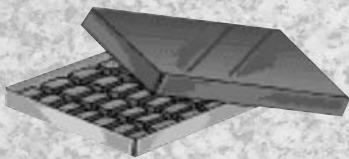


Tunis ram.



Mixed breed of piglets.

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A Special Place *for a* Special Event

Look no further than the Frontier Culture Museum for your special event. A memorable setting, easy access and plenty of parking make this the ideal location to host a corporate function, wedding, family reunion or other special occasion.



Our facilities are available during the Spring, Summer, and Fall. Leave your guests with wonderful memories in a unique setting.

Lee S. Cochran Pavilion

Guests enjoy a panoramic view overlooking the Frontier Culture Museum and the Valley beyond; setting the stage for a truly memorable event.

Octagonal Barn


The Octagonal Barn offers the unique barn setting with modern conveniences-air conditioning, kitchen facilities and restrooms. This setting has been a popular site for smaller weddings and rehearsal dinners.

For more information, or to reserve Museum facilities for your next event, please contact Linda Bowers at 540-332-7850, ext. 172.

Summer Camps at the Frontier Culture Museum

The museum's education staff, led by Larry Sabourin, organized and conducted four summer camps this year for children ranging in age from 5-13. The Summer Enrichment Camp, designed for children ages 9-13, adopted as its theme for 2008 four of the U.S. Presidents born in Virginia (Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and Woodrow Wilson). The twelve camp participants visited Monticello, Montpelier, Ash Lawn-Highland, and the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library, and participated in programs at the Frontier Culture Museum. Twenty-seven children ages 5-8 participated in the museum's Living



in the Past camp, through which they experienced daily life on the museum's 18th-century farms from England, Ireland, Germany, and Appalachia. The museum also hosted two simultaneous Nature Camp programs, one for children ages 5-8 and another for ages 9-13. The 32 participants used the museum as the backdrop for a hands-on exploration of wildlife, biology, botany, and water ecology. For information about summer camps planned for 2009, please contact Larry Sabourin at 540-332-7850 or email larry.sabourin@fcmv.virginia.gov. 

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